

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DURBAN 00040 181201Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-15 IO-14 HA-05 /087 W
-----041622 182058Z /73

R 181040Z JAN 78
FM AMCONSUL DURBAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2806
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY MASERU

UNCLAS DURBAN 0040

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, SGEN, SF (TRANSKEI)
SUBJ: MATANZIMA THREATENS TO BAN METHODIST CHURCH OF
S.A. IN TRANSKEI

1. TRANSKEI PRIME MINISTER MATANZIMA ANNOUNCED AT A SPECIALLY CALLED PRESS CONFERENCE IN UMTATA JANUARY 12 THAT HE WOULD INTRODUCE LEGISLATION IN THE NEXT SESSION OF THE TRANSKEI ASSEMBLY BANNING THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA IN TRANSKEI AND REPLACING IT WITH A METHODIST CHURCH OF TRANSKEI. HE SAID HE WOULD TAKE THE STEP BECAUSE THE METHODIST CHURCH OF S.A. WAS IN OPPOSITION TO THE INDEPENDENCE OF TRANSKEI. HE CHARGED THAT AT A METHODIST CONFERENCE IN OCTOBER 1977, A RESOLUTION HAD BEEN PASSED ENDING THE PRACTICE OF SENDING YEAR-END GREETINGS TO THE HEADS OF STATE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA BECAUSE TO CONTINUE TO DO SO WOULD MEAN INCLUDING MATANZIMA, THUS GIVING TACIT RECOGNITION TO TRANSKEI. MATANZIMA ALSO CHARGED THAT THE CHURCH WAS TAKING ITS CUE IN THIS REGARD FROM THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, WHICH IS OPPOSED TO THE
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PAGE 02 DURBAN 00040 181201Z

INDEPENDENCE OF TRANSKEI.

2. METHODIST LEADERS ARE ALARMED BY THE THREAT. THEY ARGUE THE RESOLUTION WAS NOT SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT TRANSKEI, THOUGH THEY CONCEDE THE QUESTION OF GREETINGS MATANZIMA WAS ADDUCED AS A REASON FOR THE RESOLUTION. THEY ALSO DENY THEY ARE BEING DICTATED TO BY THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES. AN EMERGENCY

MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH WAS CALLED ON JANUARY 16 IN JOHANNESBURG "TO WORK OUT THE IMPLICATIONS AND MAKE SOME SORT OF RESPONSE." SUPPORT FOR THE METHODIST POSITION HAS COME FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AS WELL AS SPOKESMEN FOR THE CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

3. THE EMERGENCY CONFERENCE PRODUCED A STATEMENT ATTEMPTING TO GLOSS OVER THE ISSUE, DENYING ANY AFFRONT WAS INTENDED TO TRANSKEI AND ASSERTING THE CHURCH DID NOT TAKE INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES. A MEETING BETWEEN CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES AND MATANZIMA HAS BEEN ARRANGED TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED BAN AMID SOME SPECULATION MATANZIMA WILL RECONSIDER HIS EDICT. (FYI: MATANZIMA, LIKE MANY OTHER XHOSAS, IS A METHODIST AND XHOSA-SPEAKING PEOPLE COMPRISE A LARGE PORTION OF METHODISTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. END FYI).FARBER

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